

Piha Strategic Weed Initiative (SWI)

Controlling wild ginger, climbing asparagus and agapanthus at Piha

The programme has been running since 2005. The project is jointly funded by The Auckland Regional Council and Waitakere City Council. To date the Council's have spent \$42,000 on the Piha SWI, with a further \$25,000 available for the 2007-2008 season.

Aims:

To work with the Piha community to control wild ginger (*Hedychium gardnerianum* and *H. flavescens*), climbing asparagus (*Asparagus scandens*) and agapanthus (*Agapanthus praecox* subsp. *orientalis*) on roadside and private property at Piha.

To protect ecologically sensitive areas such as parkland borders, coastal cliffs and the fore dunes at North and South Piha. This work complements the weed control programs operating on the adjacent regional parkland.

Results:

- The project offered treatment of Wild ginger, climbing asparagus and agapanthus free of charge to all Piha landowners.
- 334 Piha properties have been surveyed for targeted weed species by Regional Council staff.
- 83 Piha properties joined the SWI programme in 2005-2006 and were treated for wild ginger, climbing asparagus and agapanthus.
- 157 additional Piha properties joined the SWI programme in 2006-2007 and target species were treated on these properties.
- All Piha road verges have been treated twice by Council contractors for the targeted weed species.
- Replanted 79 sites.

Replanting:

The SWI programme has revegetated areas where large amounts of pest plants have been removed. Replanting speeds up the natural process of succession. A number of steep sites have been replanted to prevent and minimise erosion.

The project has funded the replanting of 79 roadside and private property sites. 58 sites were replanted by Council and 21 sites were planted by the landowners themselves.

South Piha Cliff's:

The cliffs have been treated twice; targeting agapanthus, gorse, pampas and cotyledon obiculata (succulent). A significant reduction in the weeds on the cliff face has been visually evident. The next scheduled treatment will be in March/ April 2008.

Working with the Community:

The Strategic Weed Initiative has been very successful due to the support and participation of Piha landowners. 35% of landowners have already joined the programme. Many Piha residents have removed weeds themselves and replanted gardens with natives and other suitable alternatives. The ARC and

WCC appreciate the support of the Piha Coast Care members and Piha Residents and Rate Payers Association. Council staff will be working on a demonstration site with Piha Coast Care on the corner of Rayner and Seaview Roads. This project has already been running for two years with a phased removal of the agapanthus and replanting along the steep banks. The project will expand this season to include all environmental weeds along this stretch of roadside.

Future work:

The Piha SWI is a long term project which the ARC is committed to. Over the summer of 2007/08 Council staff will be focusing on revisiting all properties who have joined the SWI programme. These surveys will allow staff to monitor the success of the treatments to date and to assess where further control work and replanting is required. We will not be expanding the project to include new properties this season. It is important that those properties already in the programme are managed and retreated so as to ensure long term eradication of the targeted pest plants. Follow-up treatments will most likely happen in late summer and landowners will be contacted beforehand. All Piha roadside verges will also receive a follow-up treatment this summer.

We would encourage Piha residents to remove weeds from their properties and to take advantage of the weed bin supplied by Waitakere City Council at the Piha Domain.

For advice on weed identification and control methods check out the ARC website www.arc.govt.nz or contact your local Biosecurity Officer Miranda Bennett ph.021 222 9069 or 09 832 6682.